

States. It is a drug called Prilosec. Prilosec is prescribed principally for ulcers or people who have an acid condition in their stomach. A 30-day supply, if one goes and gets a prescription in Minneapolis, Minnesota, at almost any pharmacy, and it is not the pharmacist, they only get about a 3 or \$4 per-prescription fee on it, so it is not the pharmacist that is driving these prices. But a 30-day supply in Minnesota, Minneapolis, is \$99.95.

You buy that same prescription in Winnipeg, Manitoba for exactly the same drug manufactured by exactly the same company in exactly the same plant under the exact same FDA approval, you buy that drug, the Prilosec in Manitoba, and it is \$50.88. But if you go down to Mexico, you can buy exactly the same drug manufactured in exactly the same plant under the exact same FDA approval for \$17.50.

Let me read for my colleagues what George Halvorson who is the chairman of one of our larger HMOs in Minneapolis had to say, and this is a direct quote:

If we could only get half the price break that Canadians get, our plan alone could have saved our members nearly \$35 million last year.

Madam Speaker, I estimate that in Medicaid alone, the U.S. Government could save \$1.8 billion if we could get half the break that Canadians are currently getting for exactly the same drugs. This is not to mention the fact that we currently have 68 million prescriptions filled each year by the VA. Madam Speaker, we are talking about billions and billions of dollars that we could save if we would simply allow free market principles to work.

We currently have what is called the North American Free Trade Agreement. We allow goods and services to move freely across our borders. In some cases we lose. Sometimes our farmers, sometimes our hog producers, sometimes our ranchers are upset about the North American Free Trade Agreement. But it is interesting. The one thing that our own government blocks our own consumers from getting across the border is prescription drugs. In fact, when some of my constituents went up and actually used mail order to order prescription drugs from Canada, the FDA sent a letter to them. It is a very threatening letter. I would like to read just a couple of sentences from it. It says:

Dear Consumer:

This letter is to advise you that the Minneapolis District of the United States Food and Drug Administration has examined a package addressed to you containing drugs which appear to be unapproved for use in the United States.

Appear to be unapproved. These are the same drugs in the same boxes manufactured in the same plants. It is ridiculous. The problem is FDA interference. The story of Minnesota seniors

is being repeated all across the country.

The solution is a bill that I have introduced, H.R. 3240, the Drug Import Fairness Act, which is a bipartisan solution. We have literally Members from what some would say the far right and the far left who have joined together on this bill to put it clear to the FDA that they should not stand between our consumers and particularly senior citizens and lower drug prices. That effort has been joined now by a group out of Utah called the Life Extension Foundation. If Members have not received it yet, they will be receiving from our office or theirs a pamphlet which talks about the problem, explains the problem and then explains the solution.

Madam Speaker, let me just close by saying this. In the age of NAFTA, our own FDA should not stand between our citizens and lower prescription drug prices. Particularly, we should not allow the FDA to stand between our senior citizens and lower drug prices. These are FDA approved drugs. We have the North American Free Trade Agreement. It is time for Congress to take action to bring American prices down to the competitive world market prices.

HONORING CLIFF HOUSER, ACCOMPLISHED BUSINESSMAN, AND OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY LEADER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BARCIA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BARCIA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Cliff Houser, an accomplished businessman and an outstanding community leader who has worked tirelessly, not only to create jobs in our State but who has also given to our community and served our country with distinction. He is the embodiment of the entrepreneurial spirit and a testament to the notion that through hard work and perseverance, one can fulfill their dreams.

I have known Cliff for many years and can personally attest to his strong character, his strong commitment to his family and his dedication to civic duty. Cliff began his career in radio in 1965 in Flint, Michigan and later moved on to the television medium, WNEM-TV in Saginaw, Michigan. In 1968, he graduated from the John F. Kennedy Special Forces Center War College. He also attended the Aresty Institute of Executive Education within the Wharton School at the university of Pennsylvania.

When Cliff was asked to serve his country in the mid-1960s, he did so without hesitation and began his tour in Vietnam. As a field correspondent and as a producer for the Armed Forces Radio Network, he was often in harm's way. For his bravery, courage and serv-

ice, Cliff was awarded the Bronze Star, the National Defense Service Medal, two Asian Theater Citations and the Vietnam Commendation Medal, among others.

Upon returning to the United States after the war, Cliff utilized his keen business sense and cofounded Video Productions, Inc. in 1974. Four years later, he expanded his business by founding an advertising agency, Tel-Ad, Inc. Cliff had the foresight to combine the two agencies, forming an award-winning national full service advertising agency, Cliff Houser & Associates Advertising Corporation.

For the last 5 years, the company has grown to be one of the top 50 fastest growing, privately held companies in our State. In fact, his company is thriving nationwide. As the CEO of a successful business, Cliff taps into his boundless energy and is heavily involved in civic activities and community leadership. He was the 1997 Bay County March of Dimes chairman, the Tri-county Chairman for Easter seals, a past member of the Advising Board of the Bay City Board of Education, and the Teen Ranch of Michigan.

Cliff also invests his time in the business community and is involved with the Michigan Small Business Leadership Panel, on the board of directors of the Downtown Management Authority of Bay City and is a charter member of the Flint Area Advertising Federation, among other organizations.

While much of his time is devoted to his business and civic responsibilities, Cliff is also devoted very much to his family. He could not have achieved these accomplishments without the love and support of his family, including his wife Elizabeth and his three children, Chip, Bethany, and Jordan who are the joy and pride of his life.

Cliff also makes his spiritual growth a priority and is very active in his church. His great appreciation for nature and the outdoors has also fostered an avid interest in hunting and recreational boating. Madam Speaker, I can unequivocally state that our community, our State of Michigan, and our country is fortunate to have Cliff Houser as a neighbor and friend. I invite my colleagues to join with me in thanking Cliff for all his good work and congratulating him on the successes of his company, Cliff Houser & Associates Advertising Corporation.

MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY ELIMINATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. HUTCHINSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise before this body and remind everyone of what we did last week that I think was very good for America. Last week, the House

passed with bipartisan support; and I think that is important, a tax bill. It was the marriage tax elimination act, which gives the average couple in America \$1,400 in tax relief that they would not have had otherwise. It will apply to 21 million families in America. In my State of Arkansas, it will apply to over 200,000 families.

It is a penalty that they pay because they are married that they would not pay otherwise. It is a penalty in the form of higher taxes. Today, Mr. Speaker, as we know, is Valentine's Day and many of us are away from our spouses, but it is a good time to remember our sweethearts. I think back on my sweetheart that I married over 26 years ago. We had struggles just like everyone else. Many of those struggles center around finances. My wife is working, I am working, and this is typical of couples. Couples struggle today and part of that struggle is simply financial.

If we can help the married couples in the United States, the married couples in Arkansas by providing some tax relief in the form of doing away with a penalty they should not pay, then I think we have done something very good for America, very good for our couples and this is certainly an appropriate day to remind America of what we did in this Congress.

Now, I say this Congress. We passed in the House, and we still of course need to have that same marriage tax penalty elimination act passed by the Senate and presented to the President for his signature, and we hope that he will sign that. To give an example as to how this works, a typical example would be a single mom that might make \$30,000 per year decides that she can get married and meet someone that she loves and she gets married to a gentleman that makes an equivalent amount of money, say \$30,000 per year. If you combine those two incomes under a fair tax system, their tax should simply double. But under the present tax code, because of the unfairness, it does not double but it doubles and then you add about \$1,400 more in a penalty because they got married. This hurts that single mom who decides to get married, it hurts any couple that decides to unite in matrimony, and it is a penalty because they are married.

I believe that it is unfair. The essence of a tax code in the United States should be fairness. We should work not just on tax relief but tax fairness and that is what this bill does. It remedies an unfairness in the tax code. They have this penalty because they are forced into a higher tax bracket because of the progressive system, and they also lose part of their standard deduction. It is a penalty because they got married. And so we need to remedy this unfairness.

Some people say, well, it is not a whole lot of money, it is just \$1,000 or

\$1,400 per year. But think what this means to a struggling young couple. It could mean 3 months of child care that they could not otherwise afford. It could mean a semester of community college that helps them get ahead in life. It could mean 4 months of car payments, school clothes for the children, perhaps they need a vacation. And it could mean the difference of having that vacation to help that relationship or not. It could mean a down payment on a home. All of this helps the couples, the struggling families in the United States.

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What does it cost? Well, it costs about \$117 billion over 10 years. Contrast this to the tax bill that we passed in the last Congress, \$792 billion over 10 years, and this was vetoed by the President. He said it was too big, he did not like it all lumped together, so this year we break it apart. The first part of that is the Marriage Tax Penalty Elimination Act.

So it does not cost something that we cannot afford. It all comes out of the non-Social Security surplus. That is what we have to remember. It does not come out of Social Security. The funds that go into the trust fund for Social Security, it all comes out of our operating surplus, so it is fair in that sense.

What are the objections to it? Well, some people say, the administration says, well, it is not limited to low-income couples.

I believe that if you have a penalty on married couples, that everyone should have that penalty removed; not just those that are on the low-income scale, but everyone should have that penalty removed. The penalty does in fact hurt more low- and middle-income people, so if we do away with the penalty, that is who we are helping the most. But we should help all couples who have that same penalty. We should remove it for everyone.

The second objection is maybe it reduces the money that could be available to shore up Social Security. Again, it comes out of the non-Social Security surplus. It does not impact that in any way whatsoever.

So, I would urge, Mr. Speaker, my colleagues to continue urging the other body to pass this, let us get it enacted into law, get it signed by the President. I believe it is a good bill for American couples and those people who are trying to celebrate another Valentine's Day.

TRIBUTE TO KIMBERLY SMITH AND LEWIS E. MAYO, TWO AMERICAN HEROES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHERWOOD). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this has been over the last couple of months and into 2000 a very tough time for the Nation's fire fighters. Over the last couple of months, we have seen these brave men and women go into fire battle to save lives and, as well, to protect us.

Houston has suffered a great loss today. In the early morning hours, Kimberly Smith, one of our first female fire fighters in Houston, Texas, and Louis E. Mayo, lost their lives battling for us. Both of them tragically fell victim to an enormous fire in our community.

The issue that we all face every day are choices of what we do and how we do it. I am very proud to say that Kimberly Smith and Louis E. Mayo offered their lives so that others might live and that the property of Houstonians might be protected. Kimberly Smith, one of the first women fire fighters, who served the Houston Fire Department ably and well, with great diligence and great professionalism, about to be married; Louis Mayo, a family man with three children, now lost forever to all of us.

Mr. Speaker, I come this evening simply to acknowledge that we love them and we will miss them. I want to thank them for going into battle on our behalf. For fire fighters, sometimes it is not known of the danger that they face every single day.

Chief Lester Tyra indicated in an interview today that fire fighters fight as many as 20 house fires or building fires a day, and that most people are not aware of the dangers that they encounter every single day, not only to protect us, but as well our property. These are important duties that they have, and we must be forever reminded that these fire fighters are in fact heroes and sheroes. They do this for us every single day.

As a former member of the Houston City Council, I had the great privilege of interacting not only with the Houston fire fighters but the Houston Police Department. I know firsthand that they are great men and women.

So, it is with great sadness I come to acknowledge before the people of the United States of America that, yes, in Houston, Texas, today, February 14, 2000, we lost two of our very special heroes, Kimberly Smith and Louis E. Mayo. May they forever rest in peace. We love them, we salute them as great Houstonians, great Texans, great Americans, and we thank them for the ultimate sacrifice.

GOOD NEWS AND BAD NEWS ON TAXES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. MCINNIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, as you know, last week was a very important